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Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2008/238, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-First Century (PARIS21) on statistical capacity-building. The report, which is presented to the Commission for information, outlines the efforts of the Partnership to promote the use of better statistics as a central part of the enabling environment for development progress, particularly through support to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics, through advocacy and by encouraging donor collaboration in statistical support programmes. The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

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Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century on statistical capacity-building

I. Introduction

1. The overall goal of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) is to develop a culture of evidence-based policymaking and implementation that serves to improve governance and government effectiveness in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. PARIS21 focuses its efforts on assisting developing countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics in order to have, inter alia, nationally owned and produced data for all Millennium Development Goal indicators and all development policy needs by 2010.

2. A national strategy for the development of statistics provides a country with a strategy for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system. The strategy will provide a vision for where the system should be in 5 to 10 years and will set milestones for getting there.[1]

II. Progress of PARIS21 in 2008

3. PARIS21 supports national strategy processes primarily through the following types of activities: (a) regional programmes; (b) advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools; (c) promotion of donor collaboration; (d) development of a methodology for national strategies; and (e) satellite programmes. Progress made in 2008 under these activities is described below.

A. Regional programmes

4. PARIS21 regional programmes are focusing increasingly on country-based activities and include various components, such as the promotion of partnership, the mobilization of technical and financial resources and on-demand advisory services to countries. Among its achievements in 2008, PARIS21 directly assisted 12 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Nicaragua, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania) in national strategy processes or in preparing interventions at donor round tables. In addition, PARIS21 organized regional seminars on national strategies for Caribbean countries (held in June 2008 in Belize) and Maghreb countries (held in December 2008 in Tunisia). PARIS21 has also provided support to partner regional events, including the Southern African Development Community Statistics Committee (in September 2008 in Gaborone) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization seminar on education statistics (in October 2008 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire).

[1] For a more detailed discussion of national strategies for the development of statistics, see E/CN.3/2005/18.

B. Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools

5. In 2008, PARIS21 assisted 10 countries in their advocacy efforts (Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania). PARIS21 has also started production of an advocacy video on women and statistics.

C. Promotion of donor collaboration

6. PARIS21 convenes an inter-agency task team whose function is to report on donor support for statistical capacity-building in all International Development Association borrower countries and lower middle-income countries. The team, known as the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), conducted its 2008 round covering the period 2006-2008 and published the results in a three-volume set. Among the key financing results that emerged from the exercise, the figures reveal that: (a) worldwide financial disbursements for statistical development amounted to roughly $550 million in the three-year period; (b) sub-Saharan Africa received well over half of total statistical support, with all other geographical regions (Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa) receiving around $50 million each; (c) three partners (the European Commission, the World Bank and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) provided nearly three quarters of total support; (d) for most of the recipient countries, disbursements represented less than 0.1 per cent of gross domestic product; and (e) nearly 20 per cent of total disbursements were not allocated to specific countries, but rather to multi-country, regional and global statistical activities. Detailed results from the 2008 PRESS round will be presented at the meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities to be held in February 2009 in New York.

7. To support donor collaboration and mobilize resources for statistics, PARIS21 also co-organized a statistical side event at the High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September 2008, which launched the new Statistics for Results Facility. The objective of the Facility is to accelerate the strengthening of statistical systems in participating countries. The Facility aims to build capacity to manage activities to achieve development results by aligning national development plans and poverty reduction strategies more closely with statistical efforts and facilitating the implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics.

D. Development of a methodology for national strategies for the development of statistics

8. In close collaboration with its partners, PARIS21 produces methodological guidance for countries interested in pursuing strategic planning for statistics.[2] Among the papers produced in 2008 are studies exploring the following: (a) the relationship between statistics and monitoring and evaluation; (b) good practices for a national strategy document; (c) financing and costing implementation of a national strategy; (d) integrating data archiving processes into national strategies; and

[2] Documents are available from http://www.paris21.org.

(e) lessons from recent large-scale evaluations of statistical capacity-building initiatives.

E. Satellite programmes

9. The PARIS21 secretariat oversees the implementation of two satellite programmes: the International Household Survey Network and the Accelerated Data Program. Both programmes have been very active in 2008. Both programmes benefit from the valuable contribution of many partners, including the World Bank, which plays a key role in terms of funding and coordination.

10. The International Household Survey Network has two primary objectives: (a) to promote improved use of survey microdata; and (b) to improve the quality of future surveys. In 2008, the Network further developed its microdata management tools (the microdata management toolkit, the national data archive application, microdata anonymization tools and documentation and dissemination guidelines). The Network has also developed its question bank and maintained its survey catalogue. It has its own management board.

11. To strengthen country capacity in producing statistical data relevant for policy design, monitoring and evaluation, the Accelerated Data Program undertakes three main tasks: (a) documentation, preservation and dissemination of existing survey microdata; (b) analysis of existing survey data and assessment of past survey programmes; and (c) development of improved survey programme and data collection. A combination of these tasks is being carried out in about 40 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Demand for the first and second tasks, in particular, is still growing.

12. The metagora project, also hosted within the PARIS21 secretariat, focused on methods, tools and frameworks for measuring human rights and democratic governance. In 2008, metagora concluded its activities, and its results were handed over to the Oslo Governance Centre of the United Nations Development Programme.

III. Future directions of the work of PARIS21

13. In 2009, PARIS21 will help to organize the Fourth Forum on Statistical Capacity-building for Arab Countries, in Cairo, and will provide support to the Fourth Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, in Luanda. In the Caribbean, PARIS21 will embark on a new programme to launch the process for national strategies for the development of statistics through, as a first step, regional activities, with specific support to be provided to Belize and Suriname. A programme of support tailored to the needs of small countries and island States will also be defined with national and regional partners, and a reflection group on how to address the issues specific to fragile States will be launched. Throughout 2009, additional studies on strategic planning in statistics will be commissioned. PARIS21 will conduct the 2009 round of PRESS and will organize a meeting of the PARIS21 consortium in Dakar from 16 to 18 November 2009. The consortium will be a unique opportunity for all of the various types of partners involved in development statistics to discuss the state of statistical development and the way forward for statistical cooperation. The consortium date is scheduled to coincide with the 10-year anniversary of the creation of PARIS21.